

A
SHORTE TREATISE
against
STAGE-PLAYES

Prov. 10. 23.

It is a sport to a foole to doe mischief.

Prov. 21. 17.

He that loues pastime shall be a poore man.

Ephes. 5. 11.

*Haue no fellowship with the vnfruitfull works of
darknesse, but rather reprove them.*



Printed in the yeere of our Lord 1625.



2
SHORTER TREATISE

of

STAGGERLAYS

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.

Pro. 10. 23.



Printed in the year of our Lord 1655.
By J. B.

(3)



AN HUMBLE
SUPPLICATION

TENDRED

to the High and Honourable House

OF

PARLIAMENT,

Assembled May xvij.

1625.



Hereas Stage-playes are repugnant to the Written Word and Will of Almighty God, the onely wise Gouvernour & righteous Judge of the whole world; dangerous to the eternall saluation both of the actours and spectatours; breede many inconueniences wheresoeuer they come; procure the judgments of God to the whole kingdome, for sinne tollerated pourchaseth Gods wrath to the whole nation, as appeareth Joshu. 22. 18. and Salomon sayth Prov. 14. 34. Sinne is a reproach to any people; and haue beene justly censured and

A 2 ·worthily

(4)

worthily prohibited by Statutes made in the late
Raigne of famousse Queene Elizabeth, and of our
Learned and Noble King James: May it there-
fore please this High and Honourable House, which
is the most honourable Court in all Europe, upon
view of this short Treatise following, to take
once more into consideration this matter of Stage-
playes, and by some few words added to the
former Statutes, to restreyn them
for ever hereafter.





A SHORT
TREATISE
 OF
 STAGE-PLAYES.

The Preface.

IN all ages the Prophets haue applied their preachings to the present occasions: and the generall concurse of many baptised Christians to Stage-playes, euery where in these times, haue occasioned the Lords remembrancers, which stand continually on their watch-towres, both more diligently to examine the nature of Stage-playes, which haue had much countenance, and some defense; to trie whether they be warrantable by the word of God or no; and also more earnest prayer to God for his assistance, and serious indeavours to dissuade Christians from entertayning them. Hence proceede these fewe ensuing reasons, briefly contracted into a narrow roome, that the reader may with facilitie conceaue the force of the arguments, and soundly judge of

the trueth of them. And for better direction to the Reader, the whole summe is drawne to these foure heads.

First, the originall beginning of Stage-playes is shewed: *sect. 2.*

Secondly, the end is pointed out for which they were first devised. *sect. 3.*

Thirdly, the generall matter or argument acted in them, is opened in few words: *sect. 4.*

Fourthly, the reasons to proue them vnlawfull are rendred: *sect. 5.*

I. The originall beginning of Stage-playes.

Heathen in-
vented playes.

2. **T**He first beginning of playes proceeded from those men which were not in the Church of God. When God had appointed man to get his liuing, with his labour Gen. 3. 19. Iuball the seauenth of Cain his race invented playing. Gen. 4. 21. on Instruments, which (as after) is a lawfull recreation. But the invention of diuers sorts of vnlawfull playes is briefly noted by Plinius Histor. natur. lib. 7. cap. 59. by Eusebius de præpar. euang. lib. 1. cap. 2. and lib. 2. cap. 2. by Arnobius contra gentes lib. 7. by Polydorus Virgilius de rerum invent. lib. 3. cap. 13. by Alexander ab Alexandro genialium dierum. libr. 6. cap. 19. by Cælius Rhodiginus antiq. lib. 8. cap. 7. Whether they grew vp first at Lydia in Asia as saith Herodotus lib. 1. or at Athens in Græcia, as Polydorus Virgilius lib. 3. cap. 13. and Volaterranus lib. 29. ca. 11. report, it is not materiall. Pausanias in Eliacis writeth that Iphitus was admonished by the oracle of Apollo

Apollo to restore the Olympike games. Iosephus Scaliger poëtices lib. 1. cap. 22. &c. may satisfie all men that desire to reade more of this point. About the beginning of the Persian monarchie, which ^{The solemn beginning of} was almost 500 yeeres afore Christ, and about the ^{playes.} time of the Iewes returne out of the captivitie of Babylon, this miscreant author alwayes of some hurte, never of any good to Christian or heathen, first came abroad with great solemnitie, as it may be gathered by Herodotus. Afterwards from those Lydians in Asia, or from the Grecians at Athens, came playes to Rome in the reigne of Tarquinius Priscus, as Eusebius noteth in his Chronologie at the yeare of the world 4602. Hermanus Contractus at the yeare of the world 3341 noteth the ^{Alexander ab Alexand.} same. And Titus Livius lib. 7. Pomponius Lætus ^{lib. 5. c. 16.} in Philippo, Funccius in his worthie Chronologie at the yeare of the world 3512. and Herodianus lib. 3. witnes how the Romans augmented their playes afterwards.

The first authorised entrance that any such kinde ^{The entrance of playes into the Church of the Iewes.} of playes or heathen exercise had into the church of God, seemeth to be about 170 yeeres before the birth of Christ, when that wicked Iesus affecting heathenisme, changed his name into Iason, and for 150 talents of silver purchased a commission of Antiochus Epiphanes king of Syria, that he might erect a place for heathen exercises at Ierusalem, and traine up the youth of the Iewes in the customes of the Gentiles, 1 Maccab. 1. 12. Ioseph. antiq. lib. 12. cap. 6. but more specially 2 Maccab. 4. 7. &c. Which exercise though it was not to play on the stage, but for activitie of their bodies, yet it may here

here be observed as an entrance to other heathen customes, and as that which maketh way to bring in Stage-playes afterwards. Then Herode the greate increased heathenish playes and exercises greatly in his dayes, building one theater at Ierusalem; Ioseph. antiq. lib. 15. cap. 10. or 11. and another at Cæsarea Stratonis; Ioseph. antiq. lib. 15. cap. 13. and lib. 16. cap. 9. The horrible finnes of the Iewes cutte them off shortly after from being the Church of God, and therefore no more can be sayd of their heathenish exercises.

Their entrance into the christian church.

How or when Playes came into the Christian Church, and who first gaue them intertainment, is more incident to this present purpose, and fitter testimonie to giue evidence hereafter either for them or against them. When the Roman Emperours delighted too much in all kind of playes, and when christian religion grew mightily under them in Europe especially, christians imbraceing the Gospel could not be altogether ignorant of these stage-playes, but sometimes some christians resorted to these playes, as by the complaints and invec-tives of some ancient fathers against them, it doth appeare. And though secretly by such meanes playes through satans subtilties approached neare to the church doore, yet all this while neither the Emperours power thrust them upon the Church, nor the reverend Fathers and faithfull Pastours of those times gaue way to such open wickednes by their silence. But when that great scarlet coloured whore of Babylon with her golden cup of abominations in her hand, which hath a name written in her forehead, a mysterie, great Babilon the mother
of

of whoredomes, and which reigneth over the kings of the earth, was set in Peters chaire at Rome as the Papists say; then did the king of the Locusts, called *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, hauing the key of the bottomeles pitt, with full power for such a purpose, sette the church doore wide open for sundrie sportes and playes to enter freely into the house of God, as Platina reporteth Paulus II. did. And that not onely in their great solemnities and festivals, which were spent commonly in bellie cheare and Playes, as Peucerus writeth of Vrbanus IIII. much after the fashion of the Israelites, sitting downe to eate and drinke, and rising up to play: but specially in their rich Iubilies, first begunne in the Christian church by Bonifacius VII. in the yeare of Christ 1300. and afterwards continued and hastened by his successors. Of which Sports and Playes Aventinus annal. Bojor. lib. 7. speaking of Clemens VI. and Bale in the life of Iulius II. doe write. And thus much shall suffice for the beginning of Playes among the Lydians of Asia; and among the Grecians and Romans in Europe; as also for their entrance into the Christian church, first secretly by the malice of Satan stealing some Christians affections to such vanities; then openly by the power of that Abaddon of Rome, who besotted mens senses with such fooleries, that he might robbe their purses in his rich Iubilies.

II. The ende for which Playes were devised.

3. **T**He finall cause or ende for which the Heathen first devised Playes, was to pacifie their
B
angrie

angrie gods, and so remoue some present calamitie which vexed them. The Lydians sought by Playes to remedie a greate famine that was among them, as Herodotus witneseth in Clio. The Athenians renewed their Playes about the latter end of the Persian Monarchie, in the dayes of Euthydemus their governour, thereby thinking to remoue a grievous pestilence, as sayth Diodorus Siculus lib. 12. Also Livius lib. 7. and Paulus Orosius libr. 3. cap. 4. write that the heathen Romans fore afflicted about the same time, with pestilence, by the advise of their idoll priests, set forth their Stage-playes to turne away that affliction, thinking their Playes would please their gods.

But Dionysius Halicarnasseus li. 7. Arnobius. lib. 7. contra gentes. Pausanias in Corinthiacis. Augustinus de civitate dei lib. 2. cap. 13. & lib. 3. cap. 18. & lib. 4. cap. 1. & cap. 26. Polydorus Virgil. de inventione rerum lib. 3. cap. 13. and Volaterranus lib. 29. cap. 11. write so plainly and fully of this matter, that the reading of any one of them may satisfie the sober minded, and giue them to understand, that as Christians by direction out of Gods word use prayer and fasting to turne away the Lords provoked anger: so heathens instructed by the Divell their master thought to remoue their afflictions by Playes. But the Popes of Rome solemnised their Festivals and Iubilies with all sortes of Playes and Sportes for recreation, and to delite the people with such fooleries.

III. The argument of Stage-playes.

4. **W**Hereas Stage-playes ordinarily goe under the name either of Tragedies or els of comedies; we are to understand that the argument or matter acted in tragedies is murder, treason, rebellion, and such like; and in comedies is bauderie, cosenage, and meere knaverie.

But here some men eyther meerly ignorant (as *Objection.* the most religious and learned are ignorant of many things, *Bucerus de regno Christi lib. 2, ca. 54.* for *we know but in part.* 1 Cor. 13. 9.) or els perversly irreligious, will say, that sometimes the sacred Scripture is or may be acted by players on the stage, and thereby a man may learne more then at a sermon.

But for better information of the ignorant, and more forcible confutation of the perverse and profane, a threefold answer may be giuen. *Answer.*

First, concerning those persons that so greatly desire to learne religion at Stage-playes, let them examine their owne consciences by their workes which are manifest before God and men, and consider themselues in these five points. *1. answer.*

1. They seldome come to the Church to learne religion according to Gods ordinance, though God command them so to doe, Deut. 12, 5. *But ye shall seeke the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put his name there, and there to dwell, and thither thou shalt come, &c.* though God intreate them so to doe, Prov. 1. 20. *Wisedome cryeth without: shee uttereth her voyce in the streets. &c.* as al-

so Prov. 9. 3. &c. and though they promised at their baptisme so to doe.

2. They reade the Scriptures little or never at home, they catechise not their families, Deut 6, 7. or they are not catechised themselves.

3. They haue little or no delite to conferre and talke of religion, but rather are wearie of such as speake to them of religion, avoide their companie, and call them Puritanes.

4. They leade not their life religiously, but follow the fashion of the world eyther one way or other.

5. They resort not to Stage-playes to learne religion, but to solace them selves in sinne.

2. answer.

Secondly, concerning the Stage-players.

1. They are no greate Divines, no Doctors of divinitie, scarce good professors of religion.

2. They are not called of God to any such public function, as to be teachers of religion.

3. They are forbidden to meddle with religion Psal. 50. 16. *What hast thou to doe to declare mine ordinances that thou shouldest take my name in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my wordes behinde thee?*

4. They abuse scripture when they rehearse it upon the stage, as conjurers and witches do in their enchantments, charmes, forceries, and conjurations.

5. They pollute Scripture when they mention it upon the Stage. For as the Priest answered Hag. 2. 14. that if a polluted person touched the sacrifices, the oblation should be uncleane: so if these Stage-

Stage-players meddle with Scripture they pollute it.

Thirdly, concerning the Scripture it selfe.

3. answer.

1. God ordeyned not that the Holy Scriptures should be acted upon the Stage, in such kinde of scurrilitie, by such light and vaine persons, nor to such ende as to make sporte and pastime; but with great reverence to be soberly handled, by faythfull and lawfull ministers, in the holy assemblies of the saintes.

2. The Scripture is Gods power to beate down sinne, and not to mainteine it; to beget fayth, not to destroy it; to bring men into Gods glorious kingdome, and not to throwe them downe into hell.

3. God smote one Theopompus, an infidell, with Lunacie, for inserting Scripture in his writings, and one Theodoctes with blindnes for citing Scripture in his tragedie, as it is reported by Iosephus antiq. lib. 12. cap. 2. and by Eusebius de præparat. euangel. lib. 8. cap. 1.

Wherefore it is a profane thing to deale with Scripture upon the Stage, or in any sport and play, it is pernicious to the actors, hearers, and beholders.

IIII. The reasons which proue Stageplayes to be unlawfull.

The first reason.

5. **T**He first reason shall be taken from their originall beginning, which was from the Hea-

1 Reason.

then, and to pacifie their idolls anger, that present afflictions might be removed, as hath been shewed before; sect. 3. And therefore they seeme unlawfull for Christians, whom the Apostle warneth to avoyd, not onely that which is evill, but also the very shewe of evill. *Absteyne from all appearance of evill.* 1 Theff. 5, 22. And in another place he sayth: *Furthermore, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things pertaine to loue, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any vertue, or if there be any prayse, thinke on these things, &c.* Philip. 4, 8. Wherefore seeing there are none of these things in Stage-playes, and that they bring with them not onely appearance of evill, but evill it selfe, they may not be counted lawfull for Christians.

Objection.

But some will say, we haue no respect to their heathenish beginning or use, but now they serue onely for recreation, and not otherwise.

Answer.

The answer first sheweth what are lawfull recreations, and secondly confuteth the objection.

Recreations.

Recreation is a meere compound Latine word, made English by use, and signifieth to *renew*, to *repaire*, to *recover*, to *restore*, or to *refresh* eyther the bodie, or the minde, or both, when they are impaired, overworne, wearied, or spent in the employments of mens lawfull callings, to the end that men recreated (for it seemeth convenient to retheyne the word) and refreshed, may chearefully returne to their lawfull callings againe, and therein serue God faithfully. Wherefore here are three things to be considered.

First,

First, that recreations are not alwayes necessarie, nor to be permitted to all persons, but onely to those that are overwearied with honest labour in their lawfull callings.

1.

Secondly, that recreations serue onely to refresh men, and make them fitter for the dueties of their callings.

2.

Thirdly, some recreations, which the Lord our gracious God, and mercifull Father hath in his wisdom and loue to his servants granted and thought meete for the sonnes of men, are particularly to be mentioned, and namely these five specially :

3.

First, some little rest from labour, as if the reapers in harvest time may but sit downe and rest them selues for one quarter of an houre, they will return more freshly to their worke againe. And so it is with all other men, in what calling soever they are occupied.

1. Rest.

Secondly, foode meate and drinke, which refresheth man comfortably, and maketh him fitter and more able to performe the dueties of his calling.

2. Foode.

Thirdly, sleepe reneweth man and refresheth him greatly, that he is thereby, as if he had not beene wearied before.

3. Sleepe.

Fourthly, some change of labour quickeneth a man, that his former wearines is forgotten.

4. Change of labour.

Fiftly, Musick is a chearefull recreation to the minde, that hath beene blunted with serious meditations.

5. Musick.

These and such like are holy and good recreations both comfortable and profitable, whereunto may be added holy conference of good men concerning

cerning good and necessarie matters.

As for hawking, hunting, fishing, fouling, and such like, they are rather to be counted honest and lawfull callings, wherein men may get their living with their labour, then recreations, except it be by change of labour, as in other lawfull callings.

Confutation. And now to come to confutation of the objection, it seemeth that Stage-playes cannot be counted in the number of recreations, and that for these three reasons.

First, they are not worhie to be compared to any of the former lawfull recreations.

Secondly, they serue not the ende of recreations, which is to refresh the wearie, but not to make men delight in sinne.

Thirdly, the most persons that ordinarily resort to them, are verie idle persons, that should rather be set to some honest labour, then so unprofitably to mispend their time to their owne hurte.

The originall beginning then is sufficient to perswade the faythfull to renounce Stage-playes, and say unto them, *Gette thee hence.* Esai. 30. 22.

The second reason.

2 Reason.

6. **T**HE second reason may be taken from the matter or argument, which is acted upon the Stage, which is eyther murther and mischief in tragedies, or bauderie and cosonage in comedies, as was observed before sect. 4. And the reason may be contrived thus.

It is not lawfull for Christians to sporte themselves eyther with the dreadfull judgments of
God

God, or with the abominable finnes of men.

But in Stage-plays there are acted sometimes the fearefull judgments of God, as in tragedies : and sometimes the vile and hatefull finnes of men, as in comedies.

And therefore it is full of horreur seriously to thinke upon them, and much more to be eyther actor to shew them, or beholder and hearer to laugh at them, or delite in them.

Ham derided his Fathers nakednes Gen. 9, 22. but he was accursed for it. Curses are denounced in Gods Law against all sinners, Deut. 27, 26. And they that make a sport of sinne cannot avoyd Gods curse, no more then they that feasted when they should haue fasted, Esay. 22, 14. *Surely this iniquitie shall not be purged from you, till ye dye, sayth the Lord of Hostes.*

The third reason.

7. **T**HE third reason is taken from the Stage-players, and from such their vices as properly belong to them, as they are Stage-players. And four of their vices may perswade all men that their playes are unlawfull. Reason.

First, they being men, change their apparel, and put on womans apparell, without which exchange they cannot act some partes in their Playes, which thing the Lord forbiddeth. Deut. 22. 5. *The woman shall not weare that which pertaineth to the man, neyther shall a man put on womans rayment: for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord thy God. For this change of apparell maketh the man effeminate, and the*

C

woman

woman manish, as some can testifie if they would, some haue confessed, and the Heathen know. Cyprianus lib. 2. epist. 2. speaking of this change of apparell in Stage-playes, sayth thus : *evirantur mares* ; men loose their manhood &c. Charondas made a law to the inhabitants of Thuria (which is a citie in Greece , described by Pausanias in Messeniacis, and by Strabo lib. 8.) that if any man refused to goe to warres, or being in the field cast downe his weapons and ranne away, he should stand three dayes in the open market in womans apparell, which argued effeminatenes in him, as if formerly he had used it. Diodor. lib. 12.

2. Secondly, they never come on the Stage in their owne name, but some in the name and person of a divell, others of a foole, others of a bawde, others of a tyrant, others of other men, which be seemeth not a Christian, neither proceedeth it of God, nor is approved of God, but is contrarie to Christian profession. Tit. 2. 12.

3. Thirdly, they sweare by the living God, which is contrarie to the Law of God, Exod. 20. 7. or by heathen idols, which is forbidden, Exod. 23. 13. or by both, which is reprov'd Amos 8. 14. Zephan. 1. 5.

4. Fourthly, they teach their hearers and beholders much sinne in the acting of their Playes, as to sweare, curse, lye, flatter, cosen, steale, to play the bawde and the harlot, with very many such other lewde lessons.

The fourth Reason.

8. **T**H E fourth reason ariseth from the consideration of the hearers and beholders, who being baptised into the name of Christ, are brought into danger of gods wrath, and their owne condemnation, in as much as they are partakers of the sinnes of the Players and of the Playes in approving them. And whatsoever brings men into these dangers must needs be evill. And besides the approbation, which maketh them guiltie, they learne sinne: for as sayth Cyprianus lib. 2. epist. 2. *adulterium discitur, dum videtur*, they learne to commit adulterie, when they heare and behold such immodest and unchaste words and gestures upon the stage. And many goe honest thither, which returne home dishonest. Iob made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not looke on a maide, Iob 31. 1. David desired God to turne away his eyes from regarding vanitie, Psal. 119. 37.

4 Reason.

The fift Reason.

9. **T**H E fift reason may be taken from consideration of these eight fruits or effects which follow Stage-playes:

5 Reason.

First, the Stage-players get their living by an ungodly & unlawfull trade, never approved by God, & when they shall stand at the barre of Gods judgement, they shall be speechles, and cast into utter darkenes, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, except they repent and forsake their wicked

1.

trade betimes, whiles the Lord granteth space to repentance.

2. Secondly, the hearers receaue much hurte by them, as was noted in the fourth reason, and if it be true which is reported, whoredome is sometimes committed at that place, and at that time.

3. Thirdly, the better sort of men which are governours of families, receaue damage, when some of their families resorte to Stage-playes, for sometimes their goods are stollen to mainteine Lewdnes, sometimes their daughters or maide-servants are defiled, or stollen away, and married without their governours consent or privitie.

4. Fourthly, the word of God and the ministers thereof, are now and then taxed and taunted.

5. Fiftly, the Lord himselfe is there blasphemed ordinarily.

6. Sixtly, the poore in the church of Christ, are hindred from some reliefe, which otherwise they might haue. for the prodigalitie lavished upon Stage-players, restrayneth the liberalitie that might and ought to be bestowed upon the poore.

dist. 86, c. 8

7. Seauenthly, there is losse of pretious time, which should be spent in Gods service, by those that are hired to be diligent labourers in his vineyard, and not be wickedly mispent in such sinfull sportes, seeing everie one, both young and olde, must giue account to God of his labours, and of his time spent in this life. The Holy Ghost sayth Ephes. 5. 16. *Redeeme the time, for the dayes are evill*; but some men say, Let us haue pastime, that is, any sinfull course, whereby we may passe away & mis-spend the short time which we haue in this life, that the day of death,

death, judgment, and condemnation may come speedily upon us before we repent, and before we consecrate our selues wholly to God. Peter sayth: *It is sufficient for us, that we haue spent the time past of this life, after the lustes of the Gentiles, walking in wantonnes, lustes, drunkennes, in gluttonie, drinkings, and abominable idolatries.* 1 Pet. 4. 3. And if any be otherwise minded, the Lord in his time will either convert or confound him.

Eightly, whereas the life of a Christian effectually called, should be spent continually in fighting against all kinde of sinne, in crucifying the old man, and in renewing the inner man dayly, these Stage-playes quench the spirit, and destroy the new man, as also on the other part, they foster, cherish, and mainteyne the old man, as all those that haue the spirit of Christ know and feele. But if any man haue not the spirit of Christ, the same is not his. Rom. 8. 9.

8.

The sixth Reason.

10. **T**HE sixt reason may be taken from the opinion and judgment of all sortes and states of men, by whom these Stage-playes haue been disallowed.

First, all orthodoxall Protestants of all ages and times, which maintayned the generall doctrine of the Catholike church, haue censured Stage-playes, as unlawfull from age to age hitherto. To reporte and repeate their severall judgements out of their owne writings, or out of histories, is more then I can performe, it would make a greate volume, it

1. Orthodoxal Protestants.

would be tedious to reade, and perhaps not so necessarie.

Wherefore it seemeth rather convenient to call a greate number of them together out of all the places of their dwellings, and as it were out of all the world, that they all may be heard to speake altogether with one consent and voyce. But because it would be a verie tedious, and troublesome thing, for so many, so reverend, and so old aged Fathers to travell so farre; it is more convenient and reasonable to spare their labours so much as may be, and call them together at three severall times, and in three severall places of their habitations; that is, to call those of Asia, to meete together in Asia: those of Africa, in Africa: and those of Europe, in Europe.

Asia,

In Asia, about two and twentie of the most reverend Fathers of those times, met together in Laodicea, somewhat more then 300 yeres after Christ, and holding a councill there, decreed cap. 54. that none of the Cleargie should be present at Stage-plays. And the Centuriators of Magdeburg haue inserted this whole Councill in their laborious and worthie historie Cent. 4. cap. 9. col. 834.

Afrike.

In Africa more then 400 years after Christ there were some four and fortie of the worthiest & learnedst Fathers assembled at Carthage in the third councill that was holden there, amongst whom was that worthie Augustinus, and they decreed cap. 11. that the children of ministers or of others of the Cleargie should not be present at Stage-plays, seeing none of the Laitie might be there.

*Semper enim Christianis omnibus hoc interdictum est, ut
ubi*

ubi blasphemii sunt, non accedant. that is ; for all christi-
ans haue evermore beene forbidden to come in
place, where blasphemers are. And the same reli-
gious Fathers then, and there decreed also cap. 35.
That the church should not refuse to receaue the
Stage-players into their fellowship, if they repen-
ted and renounced that their trade of playing.
Whereby is evident that Stage-players in those for-
mer and purer times, were generally excommuni-
cated, and cast out of the societie of the faintes.

In Europe divers worthie and graue Fathers of ^{Europe.}
the church, called and summoned by Constantinus
Magnus, a little after the Nicene Council, to come
together at Arles in France, held two Councils there,
the first, and shortly after the second. In both which
they decreed the excommunication of all Stage-
players, so long as they continued that trade of
life. And in the first Council, cap. 5. thus they
say : *De theatricis, & ipsos placuit, quandiu agunt, à
communione separari* ; that is, as touching Stage-
players, we thinke it good, that whiles they conti-
nue in that trade of life, they be kept from the com-
munion. And in the second Council held there
presently after, they decree the same thing againe,
can. 20. and almost in the same words.

But yet to giue in more evidence, we may haue
all the worthie Fathers of the Churches in Asia,
Africa, and Europa, assembled together in the sixt
generall Council, which was held at Constanti-
nople, approue that which at Laodicea in Asia, and
at Carthage in Africa, was decreed against Stage-
players. For when Constantinus Pogonatus in the
yeare 681 called that sixt general Council at Con-
stantinople

stantinople against the Monothelites of those times, as Zonaras, Tomo tertio sheweth, about five yeares after, his sonne Iustinianus II. assembled the Fathers there againe, as Gratianus dist. 16. cap. 7. and the Centuriators of Magdeburgh, Cent. 7. cap. 9. col. 455. doe witnesse : and can. 20. they approue those two former Councils of Laodicea and of Carthage.

And thus we haue the judgement of all the orthodoxall and true Catholike Fathers of the churches throughout the whole world, against Stage-players, and Stage-playing, with one consent.

2, *Papists.*

Secondly, the Papists, though they be favourers of Stage-playes, and actors sometime upon the Stage (as lately at Lions in France) yet they cannot for verie shame iustifie them, but contrariewise condemne them in their writings. And in their great Canon booke of Decrees compiled by Gratian, they ratifie the four first generall Councils, and all the other Councils made afterwards, and conteyned in that greate booke of Decrees, dist. 15. cap. 2. & 4. and dist. 16. cap. 6. &c. they approue by name the three Councils alledged before. More particularly they approue that which was mentioned before of the Council of Laodicea, de consecratione dist. 5. cap. 37. and that which was decreed against Stage-plaies in the third Council of Carthage, de consecrat. dist. 2. cap. 96. and the canons of the sixt generall Council, de consecratione dist. 3. cap. 29.

3, *Parlement.*

Thirdly, the Honourable Court of Parliament in this Land, hath justly censured Stage-players, as those that liue not in a lawfull trade to mainteyne them-

themselves by. as in the xiiij. yeare of Elizabeth , chap. 5. and in the xxxix yeare of Elizab. chap. 7. and in the second yeare of King *Iames*, chap. vij.

Fourthly, the civill law in pointing out those persons which are of evill note or name, sayth thus of Stage-players Pandect. lib. 3. tit. 2. *Eos enim, qui questus causa in certamina descendunt, & omnes propter premium in scenam prodeuntes, famosos esse, Pegasus & Nerva responderunt*; that is, Pegasus and Nerva said, that those were infamous which tryed masterie for gaine, and all that came upon the Stage for a reward. Also who list, may reade somewhat to the same purpose. Novel. const. 51.

4, The civil Law.

Fiftly, the infidell Heathens, howsoever they first devised them, and after used them very much, yet haue they disallowed them, as Augustine de civitate Dei, lib. 2. cap. 13. rehearsing the words of Scipio out of Tullie, sheweth: *Quum artem ludicram scenamque totam probro ducerent, genus id hominum non modo honore civium reliquorum carere, sed etiam tribu moveri notatione censoria voluerunt*. that is, The Romans accounting those playes, and the whole Stage to be reproachfull, when they valued the goods and enrolled the names of their citizens, gaue not the honour of other citizens to Stage-players, but razed their names out of their wardes or companies. Suetonius taxeth Nero for a favourer of them, and an actor among them. Arnobius lib. 7. contra gentes, appealing to the conscience of the Heathen, sheweth that they disallow them, and sayth thus of the Stage-players, *actores inhonestos esse jus vestrum iudicavit*, that is, your owne law hath adjudged the stage-players to be no honest men.

5, Heathens.

And these judgements of men are sufficient to condemne Stage-playes as unlawfull, and dishonest also, as Cornelius Nepos sayth in his preface before the description of the noble Emperours.

The seauenth Reason.

7 Reason.

II. **T**H E seauenth and last reason is drawne from the judgments which God hath inflicted upon the Players, and beholders.

1. Philip king of Macedonia, and father of Alexander the greate, was slaine at a play by Pausanias, as Diodorus Siculus writeth lib. 16.

Plinius histor. natur. lib. 7. cap. 53. speaking of divers that dyed sodainly, sayth, that one M. Ofilius Hilarus a noble player of Comedies, after he had played his part gallantly on the day of his birth, and was vaunting at supper of his dayes worke, died sodainly at the table.

3. Paulus Orosius lib. 7. cap. 4. writeth that in the twelft yeare of Tiberius, (which was three yeares before Christ beganne to preach the Gospel publikely) there were twentie thousand persons slaine by the fall of the Theater at Fidenæ in Italie.

4. About thirteene yeares after, Caius Caligula the Emperour was slaine at a play. Ioseph. antiq. lib. 19. cap. 1. Suetonius in Caligula cap. 58.

5. About 150 yeares after Christs nativitie, whiles the Playes were kept at Rome with great solemnitie, for the space of three dayes and three nights together, continually and without intermission,

mission, a great parte of the citie was sette on fire and consumed. And Phillip the Emperour was slayne at Varona, and his sonne at Rome, as it is reported by Sextus Aurelius, Pomponius Lætus, and Eutropius lib. 9.

6. Tertullianus in his booke de Spectaculis, sayth, that a Christian woman going to the playes, was then possessed of a divell, and when other Christians, intending to cast the divell out of her, demanded of him, how he durst presume to assault one that beleevved in Christ, the divell answered, that he found her in his owne house, and therefore had good right to seaze upon her. Also he writeth in the same Booke and place, that an other faythfull woman going also to behold the Playes, had eyther a fearefull dreame or a vision the next night after, wherein shee was checked for going to the Playes, was warned of her death, and dyed within five dayes after.

7. Aventinus annal. Bojorum lib. 7. writeth, that about 1200 yeares after Christ, three hundred men were slaine with hayle and lightning at Pisonium, a cittie of Bavaria, in the confines of Italie, whiles they were there to behold the Playes.

8. The same Author Aventinus annal. Bojor. lib. 7. writeth also, that when Pope Nicholas V. solemnized his rich Iubilie, in the yeare 1450, with Stage playes, five hundred & threescore persons, comming to Rome to behold the Playes, were partly troden to death, and partly drowned in Tiber.

9. At London in the yeare of Christ 1583 eight persons were slaine, and more hurte , by the fall of the theater.

10. At Lions in France in the moneth of August, in the yeare 1607 , whiles the Iesuites were acting their Playes , to the disgrace of true religion , and the professors thereof, the Lord from heauen continuing thunder & lightnings , for the space of two houres together , slewe twelue persons presently, and amased all the rest with great terrour and feare.

FINIS.



C 24232
69668

PHOTOSTAT FACSIMILE

REPRODUCED FROM THE COPY IN THE

HENRY E. HUNTINGTON LIBRARY

FOR REFERENCE ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION